

**Commission on the Arts and Humanities**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, April 30, 2020 | 4 pm  
Via Webex virtual meeting platform



**Commissioners in Attendance**

Chair Kay Kendall, Stacie Lee Banks, Cora Masters Barry, Edmund Fleet, Quanice Floyd, Rhona Friedman, Alma H. Gates, Natalie Hopkinson, Kymber Menkiti, MaryAnn Miller, Chinedu Osuchukwu, Jr., Josef Palermo, Maria Hall Rooney, Cicie Sattarnilasskorn, José Alberto Uclés, Gretchen B. Wharton, Derek Younger

**Commissioners Absent**

None

**Staff Present**

Heran Sereke-Brhan, Acting Executive Director; Carl Wilson, Interim Deputy Dir. & General Counsel; David Markey, Interim Sr. Grants Officer. & Arts Ed. Coord.; Lauren Dugas Glover, Public Art Manager; Brian Allende, Resource Allocation Analyst; Jeffrey Scott, Chief of External Affairs; Patrick Realiza, Social Media Specialist

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The regular monthly meeting of the District of Columbia Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CAH) was held on April 30, 2020 at 4:00 pm via Cisco Webex virtual meeting platform; Kay Kendall, Chairperson, presiding.

**Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Kendall called the meeting to order at 4:07 pm. The roll was called and a quorum was present.

**Adoption of the Agenda**

*The agenda was adopted by unanimous consent.*

**Approval of the March Regular Meeting Minutes**

*The March regular meeting minutes were approved by unanimous consent.*

**Approval of the March Special Meeting Minutes**

*The March special meeting minutes were approved by unanimous consent.*

**Welcome**

Chair Kendall welcomed everyone stating that the meeting was being held in open session in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, and was being held remotely via the Webex platform in order to follow social distancing protocols during the current COVID-19 public health emergency. She asked everyone to stay on mute unless called upon for discussions or votes.

**Public Comment**

Chris Naoum of Listen Local First gave remarks. He stated that the local music community has been one of the hardest hit of any community of artists, and that many musicians have not been able to apply for small business loans or unemployment benefits that nonprofit arts organizations may be able to access. He asked CAH to expand the number of grants for individuals, particularly musicians in FY21, and noted that he submitted written testimony to all Commissioners as well for reference.

Elena Lacayo, musician and CAH grantee, gave remarks. She stated that in past years when she had been awarded a grant from CAH she received funds in December or January, but she has not yet received any money from her current FY20 grant. She said she attempted to contact her grant manager multiple times in February and March but did not receive a response until April, when she was told she'd receive the PO number for her grant on April 15. She said that as of today, she still has not received the PO number for the grant, and wanted to express her frustration and ask if anything could be done to move the process forward.

### **Director's Report**

Acting Executive Director Heran Sereke-Brhan gave the Director's Report. She stated that on April 15, the Mayor extended the state of emergency and stay at home orders for Washington, DC to May 15, meaning that CAH staff will continue to telework for the time being. Acting Director Sereke-Brhan also stated that the recent report of the Chief Financial Officer indicates the District is facing a shortfall in excess of \$700 million in sales tax revenues. As it pertains to CAH's, the agency's budget is now funded almost entirely by the dedicating of 5% of sales tax revenues received to CAH. As many businesses have had to close due to the public health emergency, the volume of sales has decreased, which in turn decreases the amount of sales tax revenues collected, and less to dedicate to CAH's budget.

Acting Director Sereke-Brhan stated that CAH would be receiving funding from the National Endowment for the Arts for the purpose of emergency relief subgrants to DC's arts community, as mandated by the recent CARES Act. She noted that in most instances, NEA funds cannot be awarded to individuals, however CAH qualifies for an exemption to that rule, and so will be making CARES Act relief grants available to both nonprofits and individuals.

Acting Director Sereke-Brhan stated that the Department of Public Works had made the difficult decision to suspend this year's iteration of the MuralsDC program, due to the ongoing public health emergency. The MuralsDC program has been a partnership between DPW and CAH for many years, and CAH will hold on to this year's artist applications in hopes of restarting the program in 2021.

### **Finance Report**

Commissioner Sattarnilasskorn gave the Finance Report. She stated that there are approximately 40 current grantees whose paperwork has completed moving through the requisition process and will be issued purchase orders soon, at which point they can submit an invoice to receive payment of their grant award, with another 65 (approx) grantees whose paperwork is still moving through the requisition process prior to receiving purchase orders. Commissioner Sattarnilasskorn stated that CAH had been assured by the OCFO that all FY20 grantees would receive payment of their grant awards in full.

### **Grants Committee Report**

Commissioner Wharton, Committee Chair, gave the Grants Committee Report. On behalf of the Committee, Commissioner Wharton moved the following resolution:

*RESOLVED*, That the Commission waive the second-half matching requirement on CAH Fiscal Year 2020 General Operating Support and Project grants, not including matching requirements for grants in Public Art.

***By roll call vote of 16 ayes and 0 noes, the motion carried.***

*Ayes:* Banks, Barry, Fleet, Floyd, Friedman, Gates, Menkiti, Miller, Osuchukwu, Palermo, Rooney, Sattarnilasskorn, Ucles, Wharton, Younger, Kendall

*Noes:* None

*NV:* Hopkins

On behalf of the Committee, Commissioner Wharton moved a resolution, which after debate and amendment, read as follows:

*RESOLVED*, That the Commission adopt the following in regards to the subgranting of CARES Act Relief Funds received from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA):

To be eligible, applicants must be either:

1. An individual artist that is a resident of the District of Columbia whose artistic project(s) have been impacted by COVID-19, and who may or may not be a current CAH FY20 grantee (individuals that are not current CAH grantees will require expedited processing to receive grant payments, if awarded).

OR

2. A District-based nonprofit arts organization that meets all of the following:
  - i. The organization's annual budget must be under \$250,000; and,
  - ii. The organization must be a current CAH FY20 grantee; and,
  - iii. The organization must not be eligible to apply for a direct CARES Act grant from the NEA.

Awards to individuals will be \$2,500 per award; awards to organizations will be \$3,000 per award.

***By roll call vote of 17 ayes and 0 noes, the motion carried.***

*Ayes:* Banks, Barry, Fleet, Floyd, Friedman, Gates, Hopkins, Menkiti, Miller, Osuchukwu, Palermo, Rooney, Sattarnilasskorn, Ucles, Wharton, Younger, Kendall

*Noes:* None

**FY21 Program Outlooks**

Commissioner Gates, Public Art Committee Chair, and Commissioner Wharton, Grants Committee Chair, presented a proposed funding scenario for grants and public art programs in FY21, with program allocations being assigned percentages of the total grants budget, which awaits finalization pending the release of Mayor's FY21 budget for the entire District government. After discussion, Commissioner Wharton indicated that the committees and staff would continue working on alternative funding scenarios, based on additional inputs and research received, particularly the upcoming release of the Mayor's budget. Acting Director Sereke-Brhan noted that if the RFAs for FY21 grant programs were not released until after the May Commission meeting, it would be almost a month later than in recent years, potentially shifting the entire process timeline and resulting in grants being awarded later in the year than usual. Chair Kendall moved to release the FY21 grant RFAs based on the proposal currently before the Commission from the committees. Commissioner Friedman noted the absence of a quorum.

**Adjournment**

Due to the absence of a quorum, Chair Kendall adjourned the meeting at 6:32 pm.

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**Approval**

Minutes approved this 21st day of May, 2020